

GNB Workforce Investment Board, Inc.
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 2, 2009
4:30 p.m.
Large Conference Room
Southcoast Hospitals Group, Fairhaven, MA

Members Present: David DeJesus, Jr., Chair; John Fernandes; Richard F. Mello; Peter J. Muise; Ronald F. Rheaume; Charles R. Simpson, Jr.

Members absent: David Cabral (sent written proxy to Chair); David J. Ferreira (sent written proxy to Chair); Christopher J. O'Neil (sent written proxy to Chair); Maria O. Pinarreta (sent written proxy to Chair)

WIB Staff: Bridget Alexander, Len Coriaty, Jean Fox, Steve Grant

Workforce Development Staff: Norm Audette, Mayor's Liaison; Edward J. Dennehy, New Directions Southcoast, Inc.

Chair's Welcome

Chair DeJesus called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. He noted that David Cabral, David Ferreira, Chris O'Neil, and Maria Pinarreta had submitted their written proxies to the Chair.

Consent Agenda

The Minutes of the 10/21/09 Executive Committee meeting and the WIB Treasurer's Report through 10/31/09 were approved upon a motion made by John Fernandes and seconded by Peter Muise.

Scorecard Reports

Executive Committee

Chair DeJesus and Len Coriaty reviewed the scorecard. Regarding Board Membership, the Chair noted that the process is ongoing. Those aware of any prospective candidates should notify Mr. Coriaty. It was reported that two members completed the WIB orientation; an additional two individuals are scheduled for orientation. The Chair informed the Committee that he, Dave Cabral, and John Fernandes have confirmed their attendance at the upcoming national conference.

Last Monday, the Chair and Mr. Coriaty met with Mayor Lang. There was discussion on the future location of the Career Center, which is a discussion that is occurring at the state level with the Mayor. Federal funding will be required to move and upgrade. The decision on this is likely years away.

Reviewing some of the procurement efforts, the Chair stated that the *Learn at Work* grant is moving along towards its December 23 due date. The Mayor agreed to write a letter to local employers, asking them to consider participating in this collaborative effort that supports workplace English and Adult Basic Education classes in business – labor community partnerships.

The Youth Painters Program was not funded. Ms. Alexander noted that no definitive reason for denial is available at this time; however, the \$25K per participant cost for 8 people is relatively high. This funding would have partnered unemployed residents of housing projects with skilled journeymen, and it encompassed both indoor and outdoor projects. The application process was an RFQ and constitutes phase I of the funding process. As a result, there may be an opportunity for reconsideration. Chair DeJesus reminded the Committee that the Mayor is always interested in having labor at the table, but labor must be competitive in order to take advantage of opportunities. Mr. Rheaume observed that the union did offer a reduced rate for the program, lowering their scale to be competitive and entice people to participate. Locally, the undocumented workforce is competition. The union also provides health insurance and other benefits, which add to the cost. Mr. Coriaty suggested consideration of a pre-apprenticeship arrangement that would provide needed training at a lower hourly rate.

The Chair and Mr. Coriaty also informed the Mayor about the Charter Review process, noting that the current Charter expires in June of 2010. The Mayor again stressed the need to continue to focus on operations. Employers should be placing orders; the Career Center should have a database of appropriate candidates. The new Market Basket plans to hire 500 people. The Mayor mentioned that another employer, unnamed, would offer 300 clerical slots as well. There was some discussion on the number of actual hires Market Basket will need.

The WIB eNewsletter contains the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) progress report, which underscores the excellent local level of performance. The Chair also stated that the Workforce Board Association has asked Mr. Coriaty to assist in facilitating a conversation with the new Bristol WIB Chair. The Executive Director recently resigned and there is a new Chair as well as a new mayor-elect. Mr. Coriaty noted that a staffer from Representative Sullivan's office is on the transition team. Mr. Simpson inquired if a merger was a consideration. Mr. Coriaty noted that there are many issues that must be addressed before a merger becomes feasible.

Finance and Performance Measurement Committee

Mr. Muise reported on the previous meeting of the Finance and Performance Measurement Committee and noted that the WIB's financial position is as anticipated, with no major problems expected. He praised Mr. Grant's expertise and responsiveness. The Committee received new reporting from Mr. Dennehy on the Career Center. Mr. Baker updated the Committee on the Charter rewrite effort. In addition, Mr. Muise stated that the WIB intends to complete its application for High Performing Board (HPB) status for ratification at the next Executive Committee meeting scheduled for January 27, 2010, with submission to occur shortly thereafter. There is a \$100K incentive for achieving HPB status, and there are intangible advantages as well. Thus far, three WIBs have achieved HPB status, with two being approved in the first round, and with the third being the sole recipient out of six applications in the last round.

Business Development Committee

Ms. Alexander referred to her handout, stating that the Committee had retained Medium Studios, and there will be four possible logo options developed. She also indicated that her Committee will supply a marketing tracking report to supplement its regular Scorecard report. It will track media events as well as data relative to the eNewsletter, such as the subscribe/unsubscribe activity. Key resource development updates were reported earlier in the meeting by Chair DeJesus. However, Ms. Alexander explained some of the efforts in connection with the Early Literacy Consortium, citing the upcoming Barnes and Noble Book Fair beginning on December 16th. She invited Committee members to attend in costume and perhaps join Miss New Bedford and other celebrity readers during the event. The one-day event kicks off a week-long book fair. The Consortium's other activities include the Welcome Bags, which will be expanding beyond St. Luke's Hospital to Tobey Hospital, and overlap much of the WIB's stated goals and objectives.

Mr. Muise then suggested contacting Chamber President Nascimento regarding the Monday radio show he hosts, entitled "The Business Hour." The radio exposure would be a good vehicle to share information about the upcoming Barnes and Noble event, as well as the Career Center and other workforce development topics. He then asked whether or not the relatively new "English Works" effort is complementary or competing. Ms. Alexander clarified that it is supported by the Community Foundation and is working with the WIB to implement the volunteer literacy program. In addition, English Works teamed up with the WIB for the recent Learn at Work press conference.

Mr. Simpson asked if Barnes and Noble had any bulk purchasers and if those bulk purchasers received any sort of discount. Ms. Alexander replied that the store offers a 20% discount. All the schools have received the book fair flyer. If they are planning on any bulk purchases, perhaps they could order during the book fair week and the WIB could take advantage of the discount. Ms. Alexander will follow up with the schools.

Youth Council

Mr. Fernandes reviewed the scorecard, starting with the Council's decision to build in-school collaborations by holding WIA information sessions well before the summer begins. This will inform students about the need to gather and submit important documentation in order to be deemed eligible. He stated that Ms. Gloria Williams of YouthBuild NB told the Council that some of her participants earned in excess of \$4K over the summer. That is also an incentive to gather and submit the required documentation. On the Work-Based Learning Plans, Mr. Fernandes indicated that there are ongoing efforts to constructively engage employers. He noted that upcoming WIA 101 sessions will serve to inform employers about the demands of WIA and the challenges of working with at-risk youth. He would like to have businesses recognize that hiring a young person is an opportunity for that individual to gain workplace skills, and that the fit may not always be ideal.

The 597 Work and Learn proposal was submitted and is pending. YouthWorks Wareham (ARRA/Byrne) now has 26 youth, with a total target of 30-35.

Mr. Fernandes observed that Council consensus is to begin the procurement process much earlier, even without the guarantee of funding. The second year of ARRA will be underway, and formula WIA funding is never firm until mid to late spring. An earlier proposal effort will improve overall system performance. It will contain a disclaimer about the funding. The Youth Council still considers the older out-of-school population its top priority.

Other proposed system improvements discussed at the recent Youth Council meeting include the development of a new document by New Directions Southcoast that will help identify applicant status. Ms. Williams also suggested a numbered receipt to let applicants know where they are in the queue. Eligibility remains a difficult process, which Commonwealth Corporation (CommCorp) notes is universal.

Mr. Fernandes then noted that New Bedford was last in overall reporting of skill gains at a recent meeting held by Commonwealth Corporation. Extensive internal investigation has been undertaken, and some issues were uncovered. However, according to CommCorp's V.P. Susan Lange, a detailed report on state performance is forthcoming. The data used for that report will be current. New Bedford has completed its MOSES data entry for the summer ARRA programs.

Other Business

The WIB Quarterly Meeting and Holiday social is scheduled for December 16th at the Waterfront Grille. Rick Hess, President and CEO of Konarka is tentatively scheduled to speak about the company, its goals, and its projected workforce requirements, including alternative energy training and career paths.

Mr. Coriaty informed the Committee that he may be required to register as a lobbyist as a result of the recent revamping of state ethics reform laws. The changes include a broader definition of "lobbyist," and they reduce the limit in a reporting period from 50 to 25 hours for research, interaction with legislators, and the like. There is currently an effort underway to remedy the unanticipated circumstances presented by the law. He noted that under WIA, he cannot lobby. As a lobbyist, no portion of his salary may come from WIA funding. In addition, there are other costs, including a \$100. fee and a \$1,000. organizational fee.

Mr. Coriaty then mentioned that the Workforce Board Association is currently involved in the development of legislation that is in line with the dropout report that was recently released. There will be an active role for workforce boards through their Youth Councils in connection with outreach, recovery, and re-engagement of dropouts. Also, alternative educational opportunities and internships are likely to expand. At this time, there is a need to define the roles and to determine the source of funding.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion made by Mr. Fernandes and seconded by Mr. Muise.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean C. Fox
YC Director